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# **The Olympic Games and Peace Movement: Critical Reflection**

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*“Politics has no place in sport”*

Avery Brundage, USOC President, 1936

*"Sport alone cannot enforce or maintain peace. But it has a vital role to play in building a better and more peaceful world."*

Dr Jacques Rogge, IOC President, 2007

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sport development and peace become one of the popular rhetoric in the twenty-first century sporting scene. A number of sports governing bodies including the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have recently claimed that their sport can function as a useful tool for peace promotion (Darnell, 2013), and various international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whose aims are to resolve conflict and to build a peaceful environment through sport have been formed over the last two decades (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2018). The United Nations (UN) also advocates the view that sporting activities can make a valuable contribution to peacebuilding projects. Not only does the UN run an office entirely devoted to sport development and peace, but it also undertakes a range of sport for peace programmes in partnership with major sports governing bodies and NGOs (UNOSDP, 2015). At least for these transnational actors, sports are perceived as a valuable peace-building agent.

It may sound unfair to dismiss the possibility of sport being used as a peace promotion tool completely. None the less, it may be equally dangerous to accept the presumed roles that sport can play in the conflict resolution and peace maintenance uncritically. More often than not, this rather a functionalist and idealist view on sport tends to be reproduced continuously by stakeholders in sport-for-peace initiatives without clear evidence (Nicholls, Giles, & Sethna, 2011). A history also shows peace promotion through sport is no easy task. An impromptu football match between English and German soldiers on no man's land during the unofficial Christmas Truce of 1914 by no means eased the animosity between the two sides (DeGroot, 2014). The major sporting event such as the Olympic Games is often exploited politically to sustain the power of aggressive and

repressive regimes, and sporting matches, especially international ones, can intensify tensions between the participating nations when they have been political and historical rivals (Bairner, Kelly, & Lee, 2017; Hill, 1996). As George Orwell (1945) rightfully put, sports is ‘war minus the shooting’ after all.

However, it is not my intention to reveal the fallacy of sport for peace and conflict resolution. While I maintain a critical and even sceptical view on the claim frequently made by elite international sport governing bodies that sport can bring peace to the world, I contend that a real hope for building a peaceful society by means of sports lies in the organisation of inclusive grass-roots sporting festivals and non-elite international sporting events. Moreover, in an occasion where a global sports mega-event worked as a catalyst for political progress such as the improvement of human rights and democratisation, those who led such social change were neither the high-level officers in the international sport institutions nor the members of the local organising committees. In fact, these were civilian protestors and political activists who demonstrated against oppressive regimes and against sporting spectacles that help sustain the status quo and thereby benefiting the Establishment (Boykoff, 2014; Hill, 1996; Lenskyj, 2008). Therefore, in order to draw a more accurate picture of sports as a peace promotion tool, it is important to consider a range of cultural and sporting events taken place as an alternative to the major ones and a series of protests against the mainstream international sporting contests.

With this in mind, this essay will focus on the Olympic Games and its alternative visions including counter sporting festivals and anti-Olympic protests. As this conference panel is mainly about sport and peace, particular attention will be paid to the elements of a pacifist campaign including human rights activism taken place alongside (or against) the Olympics. More specifically, this essay first considers the Workers’ Olympics held during the interwar period (1918-1939) which attempted to demonstrate a more peaceful worldview via sports. Next, it will examine controversy over the 1936 Nazis Olympics, especially concerning the protest against the Hitler’s games. After this, I will present a discussion on the 1968 Mexico Olympics Games in relation to the student movement in Mexico and the civil rights movement in the US. Finally, as I will consider what we can learn from these past experiences and what we can expect from the IOC’s vision to promote peace by hosting the Olympic Games.

### **Alternative Games: the Worker’s Olympics**

During the interwar period, the Socialist International movement organised a series of international sporting festivals, namely Workers' Olympics (Tomlinson, 2010). From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a worker's sport movement began to develop in Europe in opposition to amateur sport clubs and organisations. It should be noted that amateurism at that time, to some extent, worked as a class ideology that excluded people whose daily occupation involved vigorous physical labour on the ground that their job inevitably had strengthened their body and this gave them an unquestionable advantage when playing sports (Cashmore, 2010). Hence, amateur sport existed as a cultural institute that discriminated against working class and in favour of the dominant class. As a result, a range of socialist sport clubs began to emerge in order to provide working class people with the opportunity to participate in healthy sporting activities in a more inclusive and less competitive setting (Riordan, 1984).

The early Olympic Games, the principal *modus operandi* of which is to maintain an amateur sporting spirit, clearly reproduced this class ideology (Boykoff, 2016). While Pierre de Coubertin's Olympic idealism highlights the development of humanity as a whole through sport, most athletes who participated in the Olympic Games in the early years had a privileged family background for the obvious reason that ordinary people could not afford to play sport under the strict amateur regime (Hill, 1996). The fact that every founding member of the International Olympic Committee was either an aristocrat or a wealthy businessman also indicated the exclusiveness of the international sporting competition. More problematically, the Olympic Games promoted competition on national lines and thereby stimulated nationalistic emotions between participants and spectators (Riordan, 1984). Therefore, for European socialists whose political principles lied in international solidarity and peace, the Olympic Games was perceived as an occasion which went against the post-war pacifist movement. This was particularly so when newly emerged fascist governments in the continent joined the Olympic Movement (Mandell, 1971)

It was in this context that the international socialist groups and leftist sporting association organised Workers' Olympics (Boykoff, 2016; Tomlinson, 2010). Essentially, the workers' sport movement opposed the practice of elitism, nationalism and competition embedded the bourgeois Olympics. Instead, the Workers' Games emphasised internationalism, worker solidarity and peace (Riordan, 1984). The organisers of the workers' sport festival also questioned the capacity of the Olympic movement to facilitate mutual understanding and fraternity between nations because the leaders of the International Olympic Committee, who were primarily the sons of the rich and privileged, openly displayed white supremacy over blacks and man's superiority over a woman. By contrast, the

workers' sport moment welcomed every participant regardless of their gender and ethnicity and eschewed chauvinism and militarism often demonstrated through the Olympic Games. Additionally, the Workers' Olympics valued mass participation more importantly than a selective competition between elite athletes. Simply put, this alternative socialist event was much more inclusive and peaceful than the Olympic Games in reality.

The Workers' Olympics took place three times in Frankfurt (1925), Vienna (1931), and Antwerp (1937). In 1936, Barcelona also planned to host the third Workers Games but it cancelled due to the outbreak of Spanish Civil War. The inaugural Frankfurt festival and the unmaterialized Catalan games deserve further attention. After the Great War, the International Olympic Committee barred Germany, which was blamed for being responsible for the massive warfare, from taking part in the 1920 and the 1924 Olympic Games. The first Workers Games was held in Frankfurt precisely because of the same reason but for a different purpose. By hosting the event in the defeated country, the socialist sporting community intended to display its anti-war ethos. The official slogan of the Games read 'No More War' and the organisers called the event a festival of peace (Riordan, 1984). The official poster of the first Workers' Games, which depicts an athlete stands on broken arms and a torn Nazi flag, also symbolises the pacifism that this sporting event demonstrated (See Figure 1). Moreover, during the Olympic ceremonies no national symbol was used. Instead, the participants sang communist revolutionary hymns and waved red flags to build internationalist circumstance (Boykoff, 2016). In addition to sporting activities, a range of cultural events such as an art performance and a poetry recital also took place in order to display socialist internationalism through the occasion (Riordan, 1984).

Barcelona was also about to stage the third Workers' Olympics from 19 to 26 July 1936. The Socialist International chose this period intentionally because this Spanish Games would finish a week before the 1936 Nazis Olympics in Berlin. By organising this socialist sporting festival which aimed to campaign for pacifism and multiculturalism prior to the official Olympic Games which was being blamed for glorifying militarism and displaying racism, the Socialist International intended to protest against Nazi Germany (Riordan, 1984). Due to the inclusive nature of this event, it was also called the People's Olympics which opened to everyone who wished to join. Unlike the Olympic Games in Berlin that designed to boast about the presumed superior quality of the Aryan nation, the organisers of the People's Games had an intention to celebrate a racial diversity through the event (Boykoff, 2016). The official poster of this sporting festival which portrayed the harmony of three different races well encapsulates this mood (See Figure 2). The then newly elected popular front government,

which was also associated with the Spanish Communist Party, even declared that Spain would boycott the Berlin Olympics and it would take part in the People's Games instead in protest to Hitler's government (Riordan, 1984). Unfortunately, however, this event never took place due to the Spanish Civil War that started two days before the commencement of the People's Olympics.

Both the Olympic Games and the Workers' Games were political events. However, unlike its bourgeois counterpart, the socialist Olympics did not hide its political intent. This people's sporting festival highlighted its anti-war, anti-racism and internationalist cause openly in order to fight against nationalism and fascism which were gaining its momentum until the outbreak of the World War II (Riordan, 1984). The Olympic Games never acknowledged its political connotation, arguing that there is no place for politics in sport. The Hitler's Games in 1936 will show such hypocritical characteristics of the elite IOC.



Figure 1 The Official Poster of the 1925 Worker's Olympics



Figure 2 The Official Poster of the 1936 Worker's Olympics

### The Nazi's Olympics and the Protest

A Nazi propaganda pamphlet, *Sport in the National Socialist Ideology* writes that “we Nazis see no value whatsoever in having Negroes travel to Germany and meet our ‘finest’ in competition.” (cited from Committee on Fair Play in Sports, 1935). Without a doubt, this infamous Olympics was the most militaristic and racist sporting event in its history. When

black American Jesse Owens and Korean Shon Kee-jung won the Olympic Gold before Adolf Hitler, the myth of Aryan supremacy utterly dismantled. As this Olympic Games caused controversy, especially concerning the adoption of Nuremberg Law in 1935 by Hitler and the prevalence of anti-Semitism in Germany, a series of debates took place in different countries to discuss a potential boycott (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Unspecified). Only militaristic Japan and Fascist Italy which favoured a patriotic display of sport at that time were eager to send their teams to Berlin (Mandell, 1971). Amongst growing concern about the Olympic Games which was to be held in an increasingly aggressive and extremely racist country, American campaigns against the Nazi Olympics is worth looking at in some detail as they provide valuable historical evidence to show the official Olympic elites' lukewarm gesture towards intervening political troubles in the host nation.

Many members of American civil society began to see the intent of the Berlin Olympic Games suspiciously when Adolf Hitler took power in Germany in 1933. Especially, The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), which was in charge of supervising the Olympic trials in the US, publicly announced that it would reconsider American participation in the 1936 Olympic Games in opposition to the practice of the anti-Semitism that the Nazi government endorsed (Mandell, 1971). Having observed Jewish athletes being unfairly excluded from the German Olympic team, Jeremiah Mahoney, president of the AAU, strongly opposed the discriminatory rules by Hitler's Reich, and vocally led an Olympic boycott (Daley, 1933). Mr Mahoney feared that the presence of American athletes at the Berlin Olympics might signal American approval of the Nazi regime. He also institutionalised a 'Committee on Fair Play in Sports' in order to disseminate AAU's concern over the Nazi Olympics to American society more effectively (Mandell, 1971). Ernst Lee Jahncke, an American member of the IOC, also supported the movement to boycott the Olympic Games in Berlin, arguing that Nuremberg Law was in contradiction to Olympism which forbade any form of discrimination (Rippon, 2006). Eventually, the anti-Nazi Olympic campaign surged throughout the country and many public, civic, and religious organisations such as city councils and trade unions proclaimed their resolutions against sending



**Figure 3 A pedestrian reading the notice about the demonstration against the Berlin Olympics in 1936**

American delegates to the Nazi festival (Mandell, 1971). On 3 December 1935, a massive demonstration against American participation in the Berlin Olympics also took place (See Figure 3).

Avery Brundage, president of American Olympic Committee (AOC), considered differently. Arguing that the politics and sport should not mix, he criticised those who involved in the boycott movement for politicising the Olympic Games (Rippon, 2006). Mr Brundage further claimed that the idea of Olympism which transcends every secular political thought must be kept under any circumstance (Guttmann, 1984). On this condition, the AOC president asserted that political dissent concerning the Berlin Olympics needed to be silenced, and that American athletes must take part in the Olympic Games (Large & Large, 2017). Mr Brundage also dismissed anti-Semitism being practised in German society in general and in the German sport organisations in particular. He actually travelled to Germany to investigate the accusation of discrimination against Jewish athletes by the Nazi government. After undertaking a few superficial examinations such as interviewing Jewish athletes with the presence of a Nazi supervisor, Mr Brundage reported to American people that no evidence suggested racism in the German sport system (Mandell, 1971). When the AAU and its associates questioned Avery Brundage's observation and demonstrated their anti-Olympic cause fiercely, the AOC and its supporters condemned the protestors for being 'communist dissenters' and even "Reds" (Committee on Fair Play in Sports, 1935).

As the Olympic Games came closer, the opinion within the AAU began to divide whether they continued fighting against Olympic participation or took a more pragmatic approach. Avery Brundage manoeuvred the AAU members into his pro-Olympic position (Guttmann, 1984). After extended debates and arguments, members of the AAU cast a vote and the party who intended to accept Nazi's Olympic invitation won but with only small differences (Mandell, 1971). Frustrated by the result, Jeremiah Mahoney, president of AAU and leader of anti-Olympic campaign, resigned. Subsequently, Avery Brundage was elected as new president of the organisation, and soon after the election, he asked Mahoney's supporters to leave the AAU voluntarily (Mandell, 1971). Meanwhile, the International Olympic Committee also expelled Ernst Lee Jahncke, an American IOC member and anti-Nazi Olympic campaigner, and appointed Avery Brundage as a new member of the Olympic family (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Unspecified). In the end, the Team USA participated in the Nazis Olympic Games.

The 1936 Berlin Olympics turned out to be Nazi's propaganda show (Hilton, 2008). The glorification of Nazi ideology and of militarism was evidently displayed through the



Olympic ceremonies, and every participant was asked to perform Nazi salute before Hitler. Neither Jewish nor coloured athletes were selected for the German national team. Olympic idealists such as Avery Brundage simply remained silent when observing the racial prejudice and the politicisation of the Olympic Games during the two-week period of the event (Guttmann, 1984). Three years later, the Second World War broke out. The Nazi Olympics, which had been claimed to be an occasion for promoting tolerance and peaceful understanding by the International Olympic Committee before the commencement of the event, came to be one of the preludes to the World War II. This may be indicative of the fact that those who officially affiliated with the Olympic movement has little intentions to intervene the political circumstance of the host nation even if it posed a serious threat to a peaceful development of humanity insofar as the host provides sufficient resources to keep the Olympic Games occurring. In this respect, it is hard to believe that Olympism which aims to foster universalism and peace through sports can be realised.

### **The 1968 Mexico Olympics; 1968, the Year of Protest**

The year 1968 was the time when the Olympic Game took place in Mexico City. This event marked the first Olympics held in Latin America. In the same year, a series of social and political protests erupted internationally. These demonstrations against racism, authoritarianism, and war reshaped the world (Gildea & Mark, 2013). Indeed, the Olympic year was also the year of revolt and radicalism. In fact, the 1968 Mexico Olympics was complicatedly entangled with social and political activism being developed at that time. Closely related to the civil rights movement in the US, two African-American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos conducted a political demonstration, namely black power salute, at the podium during the medal ceremony (Hartmann, 2003). This led to the expulsion of the two American runners from the Olympic Games. This was not the only political demonstration that occurred associated with the Mexico Olympics. A few days before the opening of the sports mega-event, a massive student and civil protest against the authoritarian Mexican government took place (Poniatowska, 1991). More than 300 protesters were killed during the uprising (The Economist, 2008). These two incidents also clearly show the IOC's ambiguous attitude towards the fight against social injustice which is an essential component of building a peaceful world.

#### *Mexico Student Movement in 1968 and the Olympics*

The International Olympic Committee awarded the right to stage the 1968 Olympic Games to Mexico City in 1963. The country economy was booming and Mexican government desired to show its rapid development to the world by staging the sporting event (Brewster & Brewster, 2017). Understandably, a huge amount of capital was spent on building Olympic related facilities and infrastructure. While the host city's urban scape was being increasingly modernised in preparation for the supreme sporting competition, the domestic political environment by no means displayed modern democracy (The Economist, 2008). One party had ruled the country since 1929 and the most authoritarian regime in the Mexican history took power in 1964 (Poniatowska, 1991). The news reports were heavily censored and trade unions were brutally repressed (The Economist, 2008). Under this circumstance, a number of people who



**Figure 4 An armoured vehicle patrolling the crowd in the Tlatelolco Plaza near Mexico City in 1968**

were asking for democratic reformation began to grow. As the Olympic Games came closer, a student movement for political change broke out in Mexico, claiming that “we do not want the Olympic Games, we want a revolution” (Poniatowska, 1991). The police repressed the student revolt violently. A week before the commencement of the Summer Olympics, angered by the authority's harshly suppression, almost 10 thousand students and civilians gathered in a plaza in Tlatelolco near Mexico City to stage a demonstration against the authoritarian regime (Brewster & Brewster, 2009). At this time, the authority dispatched military forces including tanks and helicopters to control the civic uprising (See Figure 4). The tanks bulldozed the square and army fired at the unarmed people. Many civilians were beaten and tortured by the forces, and, as a result, more than 300 demonstrators were slaughtered.

Having observed the trouble in Mexico, the International Olympic Committee once considered the relocation of the Olympic venue to Los Angeles (Senn, 1999). However, the IOC maintained lukewarm gesture at the situation in Mexico overall. In his interview with the media after the massacre, David Cecil (Lord Exeter), the vice president of the IOC, stated that “the riots have nothing to do with the Olympic Games. The students are not protesting against the games but against the Mexican government (BBC, Unspecified).” It is rather surprising

that the vice president did not mention the military crackdown which claimed the lives of several hundred civilians. The implication is that the sporting spectacle must go on in spite of the political turmoil in Mexico. Avery Brundage (1968), at this time as a capacity of the president of the IOC, also stated that “if our Games are to be stopped every time the politicians violate the laws of humanity, there will never be any international contests. Is it not better to maintain and support the Olympic Games, one of the most priceless and powerful instruments of our present civilization, and try to expand the fair play and sportsmanship of the athletics field into other areas?” This may be an indication of the IOC president’s non-intervention policy based on his sport-and-politics-should-not-mix belief. Yet, what Mr Brundage did not see, or pretended not to see, is that by allowing Mexico City to stage the Olympics, the IOC helped sustain the legitimacy of the undemocratic government in Mexico against the desire of Mexican people.

#### *American Civil Rights Movement in 1968 and the Olympics*

In on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr., the most prominent leader of the black civil rights movement in the US, was assassinated. A few days later, the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited any attempt to injure or intimidate others by the reason of their race and religion, was legislated on 11 April 1968. Both the assassination of the most visible activist and the introduction of the most important rule in the history of American civil rights movement occurred in 1968. This may be a co-incident but these two facts render the year 1968 the time of historical significance. As a pacifist and non-violent activist, Martin Luther King Jr led African-American civil rights movement throughout the 1960’s until he was murdered. While he did not see the legislation of the Civil Rights Act, his contribution to this political progress is unquestionable. After his death, American society observed the surge of massive race riot throughout the country. Also, despite the new legislation, black people in the US were still treated as a secondary citizen. The tensions over racial politics were visibly high in 1968 therefore.

In the midst of the racial conflicts, the Olympic Games took place in October 1968. The US sent its delegates to Mexico, and the team USA included many African-American athletes. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, Tommie Smith and John Carlos won an Olympic gold and bronze respectively in the 200-meter sprint event. America celebrated their sporting success at home. The two black sprinters felt contradiction, however. While the two athletes were seen as patriotic sporting heroes at the Olympic stadium, the two individuals were still experiencing racial segregation in their home country (Hartmann, 2003). The two American

Olympians decided to protest. They wore black socks and black gloves at the medal ceremony. When the American anthem was being played and its flag being raised, Tommie Smith and John Carlos conducted the black power salute with their heads bowed (See Figure 5). This was the demonstration against racial injustice in the US, and was the continuation of the civil rights movement held in the Olympic stadium.

The president of the International Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage vehemently criticised Tommie Smith and John Carlos for bringing politics into the Olympics (Senn, 1999). They were subsequently expelled from the Olympic village. The IOC also forced them to forfeit their Olympic medals. This IOC's response represents the sport governing body's biased attitudes towards a particular social movement. It should be borne in mind that when Avery Brundage was the president of the American Olympic Committee, he allowed Olympic athletes to conduct the Nazi salute at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. Yet, the same person now blamed the black salute for politicising the sporting ritual. Objectively, the Nazi salute signifies anti-Semitism, racial prejudice, and even militarism whereas the black salute symbolises anti-racism and the improvement of civil rights. Nevertheless, although the two events took place at different historical junctures, the IOC sanctioned the former and prohibited the latter.

More interestingly, the IOC endorsed the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) which was also largely concerned with preventing racial segregation and discrimination during the Mexico Olympics (Brewster & Brewster, 2017). The Olympic athletes were permitted to wear a round OPHR badge to represent the political cause during the event. As Figure 5 shows, the three medallists attached this symbol to their jerseys. This produces a contradiction. In reality, both the OPHR and the black salute had the same goal: to fight against racism. In this respect, it is difficult to understand the IOC's punitive measures against Tommie Smith and John Carlos who tried to, in fact, materialise the aim of the OPHR, through their saluting gesture, more meaningfully. Perhaps, the IOC was only interested in producing an image that the sport governing body endorses a good cause without practically considering how to realise the aims of the campaign.



**Figure 5 The Black Salute Protest at the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games**

## Critical Reflection

Thus far, I have looked at three major occurrences that took place in the history of the Olympic Games. These are 1) the Workers' Games as an alternative to the early modern Olympic Games, 2) the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games and the protest against this Hitler's games, and 3) the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City and the two different political protests linked to the event: the student movement in Mexico and the civil rights movement in the US. The three cases were chosen because they were somehow related to peace movement at different historical points. The Socialist International staged the Workers' Olympics in different European cities during the interwar period because, according to their view, the IOC's main events, which highlighted elitism, nationalism and competition, increased nationalist tensions between the participating nations unnecessarily (Riordan, 1984). The Worker's Olympics, which emphasised internationalism and open participation, offered an antidote to war-minus the shooting type sporting event.

The Berlin Olympic Games in 1936 turned out to be a Nazi festival that glorified Hitler and displayed the Aryan supremacy over other races, especially Jewish and black people (Hilton, 2008). While the official Olympic family remained silent, thereby approved the bellicose Nazi regime which eventually started the World War II, many civic communities, particularly those in the US protested against sending their delegations to the Nazi Olympics (Mandell, 1971). Civic society and the IOC clashed again in the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. The people of Mexico revolted against the authoritarian government, during which several hundred civilians were killed (Poniatowska, 1991). Yet, the IOC did not take such a violent crackdown by the regime seriously and simply let the government staged the sporting spectacle (Brewster & Brewster, 2009). Also, when American athletes protested against racial discrimination in their home country during the Olympic Games, the president of the International Olympic Committee who was also an American citizen, criticised, punished and expelled the athletes from the Olympic site (Hartmann, 2003).

What these events suggest is that the IOC and the social and political elites associated it tends to make an effort to tackle and resolve the problems that each historical epoch faces reluctantly and passively at best. At a surface level, the Olympic family widely advertises a range of social and political causes in which they are involved such as a human rights movement and a peace promotion campaign. Yet, as the Olympic Project of Human Rights linked the 1968 Olympic Games reveals, the International Olympic Committee considers successful delivery of the Olympic Games more importantly than actual resolution of social and political injustice. More contemporary examples that support this trend can be

identified without difficulties. The 1988 Seoul Olympics, the 2000 Beijing Olympics, the 2014 Sochi Olympics are to name but a few that the sports mega-events that were awarded to non-democratic regimes. Some events had engendered unintended positive implications such as the democratisation of South Korea in the 1987 (Hill, 1996). Yet, objectively speaking, what facilitated the political progress in South Korea at that time was not the Olympic Movement per se but student and civilian activists who fought against the military dictatorship more throughout the 1980's (Lee, 2017). Again, the IOC's main interests at that time did not lie in the democratisation of Korea but in the military regime's assurance that Seoul would be able to deliver the Games as scheduled (Pound, 1994). After the event had ended, the sport-governing body and the Olympic family began to announce that the Games brought the political change to South Korea.

Now, the South Korean town of Pyeongchang will host the Winter Olympic Games. Given the sport for peace and development has become one of the key policy agendas within international sport governing bodies including the International Olympic Committee (Darnell, 2013), the local organising committee of the Winter Olympics set 'Peace Olympics' as one of the event slogans. Here, the implication is to improve the relations between North and South Korea through sport although until the end of 2107 military and political tensions were high in the Korean peninsula. On his New Year's speech, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un stated communist Korea's intention to support the Winter Olympics to be held in the south including sending its delegations to Pyeongchang. Since then, the conversation between the two Koreas have developed fast, and on on the 20th of January 2018, the IOC produces the declaration which confirms that the two Koreas marched together at the opening ceremony and the two sides field a unified female ice hockey team at the competition (IOC, 2018). From the viewpoint of the inter-Korean relations, such collaboration between the two Koreas at the Olympic Games is certainly a significant political breakthrough and marks a humble but meaningful step made forward to peace promotion and even the reunification of the Korean peninsula (Rowe & Lee, 2018). Yet, let us not allow the IOC and the Olympic family to take credit for the candle of peace that has just been lit before the Winter Olympics. The medal should be award to Korean people who have been patiently and quietly bearing the emotional pain that the partition of the nation incurs.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the history of the alternative Olympic events and a series of political activism against the official Olympic Games implies that a truly peaceful world is more likely to be envisaged not through the elite Olympic Games but through a popular sporting event and through the individuals who challenge the authorities within the world of sport. Building a peaceful world in some cases necessitates significant political and economic reform. In spite of their generous appearance, the official Olympic family, who are mostly the rich and powerful within the current economic and political order, appears not very much willing to facilitate such a transformation as the Olympic history shows (Boykoff, 2016). If this contemplation is correct, the statement that the Olympics can play a role in building a peaceful world is hypocrisy. Only time will tell.

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